

GTPA
GLOBAL TRADE PROFESSIONALS ALLIANCE

Open, transparent and rules-based international trade for eCommerce and Digital Services are critical to economic prosperity

“The GTPA congratulates the 76 WTO members committed to establishing eCommerce rules. The rapid pace and scale of technological change and global flows of information, among other forces, are disrupting labour markets and fundamentally altering the future of work. While these shifts may create economic growth, new jobs and flexible work, they may also lead to the automation and consequent disappearance of routine, manual roles,” said Lisa McAuley, CEO of the Global Trade Professionals Alliance (GTPA).

Technological advancements, despite the disruption, also create opportunities for expansion into global markets for sectors of the population excluded from more traditional trade mechanisms. The ability to seize these opportunities and manage potential obstacles, however, is not evenly distributed.

Vulnerable and marginalized populations could face a ‘double disadvantage’ in the future, due to a lack of awareness of or means to adapt to these changes.

“The GTPA is very supportive of the announcement that WTO member nations will begin talks in March to put in place global rules governing the fast-growing eCommerce sector, a clear sign the WTO understands its traditional protocols aren't suited to a relatively new but increasingly mainstream way of doing business,” said Ms McAuley

This is an important initiative that can put in place a framework to shape the rules of eCommerce in years to come.

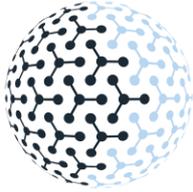
The GTPA understands that this initiative currently only includes around half of the WTO's 164 members, and we believe that it is important to encourage other country members to join. It is particularly important that LDCs are encouraged to participate in these talks. It is GTPA's belief that LDCs will be able to benefit significantly from the advantages that eCommerce can provide by empowering their businesses to engage in global trade in a way that they might not have been able to in the past.

Ms Collins Rex, Director of the GTPA, has been driving our work in this area. Ms Rex said, “The GTPA supports the need for implementing basic standards for digital trade in areas like consumer protection and electronic contracts. Such standards may play a critical role in removing barriers and complexities to digital trade, with studies finding that around 70 regional trade agreements around the world currently include chapters on eCommerce.”

However, we note that there are concerns from consumers and civil society organisations, and we believe that it is important for policy to reflect the needs of consumers, importers and exporters, as well as the organisations that facilitate eCommerce and Digital Services trade.

Domestic Policy: Creating the right domestic policy parameters to support and facilitate eCommerce opportunities

Building mechanisms that can create trust in eCommerce will be important at a domestic policy level and it is therefore imperative that businesses be engaged in any policy design and implementation.



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Policy makers need to engage with local governments, industry bodies and peak business associations, such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

“Any eCommerce policy development needs to focus on the inclusive nature of the age of digital transformation. Policy must take into account the needs of a new generation, while not ignoring the fiscal needs of countries. GTPA believes that dialogue and inclusion will move policy makers away from regressive, punitive taxes, and towards new thinking and more progressive economic models.”
Lisa McAuley said

Involving Least Development Countries (LDCs)

It is imperative that any new policy frameworks at a multilateral level consider the concerns from an LDC perspective. This includes capacity building, the need for education and skills development, as well as support and advocacy to assist in bringing LDCs into the digital economy and the broader world of traditional trade.

There are many issues to consider and the GTPA’s concerns are focused on the development of eCommerce policies and standards from an LDC perspective, particularly as these relate to infrastructure requirements for eCommerce, issues relating to payments, and access to funding to ensure infrastructure is developed for efficient participation by all businesses in the eCommerce opportunity.

Support must be given to assist LDCs to prepare governments to actively participate in the negotiations and ensure that these officials have the capacity to effectively participate.

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